



MEETING THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT CHALLENGE

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Abstract

"JPL's Approach for Helping Flight Project Managers Meet Today's Management Challenges"

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The Jet Propulsion Laboratory has recently implemented a number of improvements to help flight project managers cope with today's highly competitive, cost-capped environment. This paper discusses the programmatic, technical and cultural challenges that were encountered and overcome during the process. The objective was to increase the mission success, performance and implementation efficiency of projects by providing additional institutional support, training, and, when appropriate, standardization. New guidance was generated for designing, managing, and implementing spacecraft and flight projects. Improvements were made in the planning, cost estimation and oversight processes through the development of a standard life cycle and a set of required gate products. Organizational changes were made adding a new Associate Director, a Project Support Office and a burden-funded Formulation Support Team. A new project support website, cost databases and costing tools were created for capturing and presenting historic data, examples and templates. Training was improved by introducing a new, highly rated, week-long project manager course structured around the life cycle and implementation practices. Roles and responsibilities assigned to project and line management were rebalanced to create a better partnership, and oversight processes were better coordinated with project reviews and timelines. The overall effort has been acclaimed by project managers and industry partners, and suggests a model that could be adapted to other Centers.



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